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DAKAR PLS PASS RAO, DAO, AND ODC

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/03/2016
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINS](#) [PHUM](#) [GA](#) [SG](#)
SUBJECT: THE GAMBIA: SUSPECTS IN COUP PLOT CHARGED,
SENEGALESE HELP SOUGHT

REF: BANJUL 252 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: AMBASSADOR JOSEPH STAFFORD, REASON 1.4 (B AND D)

SUMMARY

[11](#). (C) Seventeen suspects in the failed coup plot are finally charged, as the GOTG continues to press the GOS for access to the plot's ringleader. END SUMMARY

DETAINEES CHARGED

[12](#). (U) On April 28, 17 detainees suspected of involvement in the coup plot thwarted here March 21 (reftel) were brought before the High Court and formally charged. Many of the detainees had been picked up shortly after the incident, and all had been held beyond the maximum 72-hour limit within which, by law, suspects are to be charged. According to media reports, the detainees, who were not identified, were charged with "treason and conspiracy to commit treason." The court scheduled trial proceedings for May 10.

[13](#). (C) In conversation with Ambassador, Pap Saine, Editor-in-Chief of the independent daily, "The Point," stated that Amcit (dual U.S.- Gambian national) Tamsir Jasseh was among those charged and that military personnel as well as civilians were among the seventeen. (Note: Embassy continues to press GOTG for access to Jasseh. END NOTE) Saine asserted, though, that there were still a few detainees that had not as yet been charged, among them Jasseh 's lawyer, (Mariam) Denton.

SOLICITING SENEGALESE HELP

[14](#). (C) Editor-in-Chief Saine said he was certain that the coup plot's presumed ringleader, former Chief of Defense Staff Lt Col Ndure Cham, remained in Senegal and that both Gambian and Senegalese authorities knew his whereabouts. According to Saine, Gambian Foreign Minister Lamin Kaba Bajo visited Dakar April 29 and met with President Wade to repeat previous requests that Senegalese authorities apprehend and extradite Cham -- or, at a minimum, permit Gambian officials to question him. Citing a member of Formin Bajo's entourage as his source, Saine claimed that Wade had responded with a vague indication of willingness to be helpful, with no clear commitment of acceding to the GOTG's request. Saine expressed doubt that the GOS would end up cooperating with the GOTG regarding Cham's disposition, citing the Senegalese concern, regarding extradition, for the legal provision against handing over persons that could face the death penalty.

COMMENT

15. (C) The delay in charging detainees in connection with the failed coup plot is indicative of the pattern of abuse surrounding authorities' response to the incident. It remains to be seen how far the GOTG is willing to go in pressing the GOS over ringleader Cham; but the GOTG is doubtless keen to avoid again sparking a severe bilateral crisis as it did in August 2005 through failure to consult properly with its neighbor over sensitive transport and border issues. END COMMENT.

STAFFORD